

Item B. 1 **06/00716/FUL** **Refuse Full Planning Permission**

Case Officer **Miss Lyndsey Cookson**

Ward **Heath Charnock and Rivington**

Proposal **Retrospective application for erection of agricultural building,**

Location **Land 260m South West Of Gardeners Cottage 83 Rawlinson Lane Heath Charnock**

Applicant **Mr R Darbyshire**

Proposal: This retrospective application relates to a site located to the south of Rawlinson Lane, Heath Charnock. The proposal is for the erection of a steel portal-framed agricultural building, which has largely been constructed. The building is sited adjacent to woodland, and accessed by a single track, beyond existing dwellinghouses and agricultural buildings.

The agricultural building will provide 508.5m of floorspace and will be used for the storage of hay and agricultural machinery. It will also be used for lambing of the sheep flock, but otherwise it is not intended to house livestock. The building measures 22.5m x 18m and is 3.2m to the eaves with a lean-to extension which extends to 4.6m x 22.5m and is 2.4m to the eaves. It has a ridge height of 6m. The building will comprise of a steel portal frame construction with box profile sheeted roof and green plastic coated metal profile sheeting. The entrance will be 7m in width on the front elevation.

Background: It is stated that the agricultural building will be used in connection with the applicants farming activities. These involve the breeding and rearing of sheep (there is currently a breeding flock of 28 ewes) and the production of hay (which is primarily sold to the equestrian market). Agricultural land owned by the applicant extends to 8.47 hectares and in addition the applicant occupies, as a seasonal licensee, an additional 3.517 hectares of adjoining land which is owned by a neighbour.

Existing structures on the land include a stone dwellinghouse, stone barn with small lean-to and attached open fronted building, and two steel portal framed buildings.

Policy: Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts
Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
DC1: Development in the Green Belt
EP7: Agricultural Development

Planning History: There is no relevant planning history relating to the land at this property.

Consultations: The County Land Agent has the following comments to make:

- A building is needed as currently there is not enough space for the farming operations, and in particular, machinery has to be left outside when an existing building is full of hay and used for lambing;

- The applicant has 30 breeding ewes and two tups. Approximately 1000 conventional bales of hay are made each year;
- Existing buildings comprise of:
 - A stone building, used for garaging motor vehicles, with a small lean-to and an attached building used for general storage;
 - Two steel portal framed buildings. One is used for hay storage and contains 15 sections for lambing, the other is used for non agricultural activities.
- The assessment is based on the guidance provided by Annex E of PPG7 (revised). There are a number of conditions of development which should be satisfied when considering planning applications, the most relevant being:
 - *The development must reasonably be necessary for the purposes of agriculture.* The floor space contained within the existing building, which has a principle storage use, should be taken into account. Calculations suggest there is an additional requirement of 144 square metres.
 - *The design of the building should be in accordance with its agricultural use.* An open fronted building would be preferable, the lower eaves limit the storage space, the lean-to has a limited use, the ventilation could be improved and the size of the building is larger than required.
 - *Siting.* The building is some distance from the existing buildings.
- Should planning permission be granted it may be appropriate for a condition limiting the use of the building to agricultural use;
- The applicant has managed with the existing facilities for a number of years and although some additional undercover storage may be appropriate, this should only be a modest scale. The proposed building is significantly larger than that required, has not been purposely built for the intended use, and is located some distance from the existing facilities.

The Parish Council has no objection but queries that the report does not take into account an existing agricultural building.

Representations: None

Argument put forward by the applicant:

- The building is well located to the agricultural land farmed by the applicant. Its siting, on a parcel of vacant land surrounded by woodland, means that the building would have a negligible impact on the visual amenity of the countryside and the Green Belt;
- Calculations have been submitted for the storage requirements for the farming activities, which have taken into account lambing, feed, hay, machinery storage, access and manoeuvring and storage of sprays and fertilisers. This amounts to 508.3 square metres, and given the maximum available storage accommodation is 508.5

square metres, the building is requisite for the agricultural storage requirements of the applicants farming activities;

- Vehicular access for farm machinery into the yard adjoining Gardeners Cottage is very restricted hence the reason for the siting of the new building;
- Hay production is intended to increase from 1000 to 4000 bales;
- It is sufficient to establish that the new building is for the purpose of agriculture and thereby does not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Assessment:

The site lies within the Green Belt as defined by policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review. Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 'Green Belts' states that development in the countryside for agricultural purposes is appropriate in principle. It also states the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within...the Green Belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design.

Policy EP7 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for agricultural development except where it would materially worsen the impact on nearby housing or community uses or the landscape in terms of noise, smell or appearance.

The main issue to consider is its impact on the Green Belt by virtue of appropriateness, scale, design and appearance.

The erection of a building for agricultural purposes is not necessarily inappropriate in the Green Belt. Case law supports the issue that an agricultural building is only appropriate if it serves an agricultural need (Brentwood 16/06/2004). Although a viability test is not required to establish this, if the building would clearly fail such a test, and supporting evidence has been provided that a building of this size is not needed in this location, it is not considered to be genuinely required for agricultural purposes (Carlisle 24/09/2003).

The farming activities are currently accommodated within existing buildings, and the only evidence submitted that the applicant intends to extend/develop his enterprise is for increased hay production, although this would not significantly increase the calculated required accommodation. Whilst the Land Agent has identified that there is some scope for additional undercover storage accommodation, it is considered that an additional agricultural building at the scale proposed is excessive, given the requirements for its use and the presence of existing buildings. Notwithstanding the calculations submitted by the agent, which do not take into account the existing building, there is no agricultural need for development of this size and it is not genuinely required. The proposed building cannot therefore be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt

The agricultural building is large in terms of bulk and scale. Some design features are not appropriate to the agricultural need, including a restrictive access provision and subsequent excessive manoeuvring space, a limited storage height due to the height of the eaves, and a limited use in the lean-to at the rear. The side cladding is coloured green in an attempt to blend the building in

with the surrounding area, although this is difficult to achieve given its size.

Guidance in paragraph 27 of Annex PPG7 (revised) states that new buildings should normally form part of a group rather than stand in isolation, and relate to existing buildings in size and colour. Although this guidance was not produced to advise on the siting of a building when assessing a planning application, it is nonetheless appropriate. The proposed agricultural building would be sited approximately 150m to the south of the existing group of buildings in an isolated location. Although the building is well screened, given its bulk and scale it would form an intrusive feature within the Green Belt, which would be harmful to the open and rural character.

Conclusion: The proposed agricultural building would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, on the basis that there is no justified agricultural need for development of that scale. Furthermore, the development is harmful to the visual amenity of the Green Belt by reason of its design, scale, external appearance and siting. The proposal is therefore contrary to the policy DC1 and EP7 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

Recommendation: Refuse Full Planning Permission

Reasons

1. The proposed agricultural building would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, on the basis that there is no justified agricultural need for development of that scale. Furthermore, the development is harmful to the visual amenity of the Green Belt by reason of its design, scale, external appearance and siting. The proposal is therefore contrary to the policy DC1 and EP7 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.
